1: Herskovits E-4, 8 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

grain in her mortar or working in her garden near by. On market days she takes the produce of the family's fields to the town to sell. If she has young children, she cares for them while she does her other work, but when they are old enough, they help her about the house if they are girls, or, if boys, go with their father to the garden. From time to time, when house repairs are needed or there are implements to be mended, the man spends a day at home getting these odd jobs done; otherwise only serious illness in the family keeps him from his fields.

The times for meals have not varied since the days when Moreau de St. Mery described the eating-habits of the slaves.[1] In addition to the mid-morning repast, the only other meal is that eaten after the man returns from his field, this being the largest of the day. A wife does not sit down with her husband, but usually eats earlier with her small children and holds herself ready to serve him upon his return, when, if he is alone, she remains to tell him the day's gossip. Visitors are often present, for peasant etiquette demands that all comers be offered food, and, as one Haitian expressed it, "The peasant would kill you for the insult if you did not share your meal with him." Bedtime, as might be expected, is early.

On Sundays and on the days of festivals this routine is interrupted, when, if the occasion is of sufficient importance and the habitation is not too far from town, the peasant and his family attend mass. On Saturday nights there is usually a *vodun* dance, when the early hour for retirement is forgotten and all-night festivities precede Sunday's rest. On such days the principal meal is eaten at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, and all the adults share it together, while at one side the children are fed from the dishes of their parents in response to the insistent repetition of the demand "*Ba'm pa'm* — give me my portion." •

• This is an example of the elision characteristic of Haitian Créole, it being abbreviated from *Ba moin part moin* or, in French, *Donnez-moi ma part*.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mbebelais

769 On the following night the *mangé mort* is held, when sacrifices are given the recent and earlier dead of the family. The day is used for preparing the food, after which a table is set as for a dinner, with plates, knives, forks, salt and pepper; and sometimes chairs are placed, though this is not necessary, since it is felt that the dead prefer to eat standing. Chicken, rice, and many other types of dishes are provided, so that the tastes of all the dead may be satisfied. A stew of maize, red beans, salt beef, and pigs' feet cooked with peppers and spices are included for the *morts Guinée*. Under the table are two wooden food-containers, one for the children of the family, the other for the dogs of the household.

Shortly after darkness has fallen, the room containing the table is locked, to remain closed for some two hours, while the family, a few friends, and the *prêt' savanne* pray and sing canticles as they wait for the dead to do their feasting. Before the prayers an announcement is made for whom the food is being given; the known dead of the family are called by name, while "those drowned, those shot," and "those who come from the four corners of the earth" are also summoned. When it is judged that the dead have finished their meal, the *prêt' savanne* or an elder of the family knocks three times on the closed door before he enters and takes up a cup of sacred water and a sprig of orange leaves, with which he blesses the table by sprinkling it. He then carries one of the wooden containers to the gateway and, turning to the children, asks them three times: "*Nous content?* — Are you satisfied?" to which the answer: "*Oui!*" is given. The priest makes a motion as though to place the container on the ground, but instead raises it again, repeating this maneuver for each of the four corners of the earth before he finally puts it down, whereupon all the children rush forward, each striving to obtain as much food as he can. When the children have finished eating, they wipe [976] their hands on the hair of the mistress of the house, saying: "*Grâce mist'corde.*" The family then take the other con-

2: Courlander 8-5 (1937-1953) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

Then a well-dressed young man entered, and the drummers swiftly changed to the salute reserved for guests of distinction. The hounsi sang, "Président passe là, l'ap monté au gouvernment!" and waved paper flags and kerchiefs. The young man was a distant relative of Stephan's; he also was a houngan.

After a while Stephan brought from his hounfor a second asson, or ritual rattle, and another small hand bell, both of which he handed to the young man. He was extending the courtesy of his hounfor, sharing his instruments of authority and religious power with his fellow houngan. Then followed an exhibition between the two houngans that was half duel and half ballet. They stood face to face, each of them holding the asson in one hand and the tiny bell in the other. Stephan was "testing" the young houngan for the edification of all present. Each tiny move made by Stephan was duplicated simultaneously by his guest, as though he were a mirrored reflection.

Every posture Stephan made was duplicated instantly by his guest. The assons and the bells were agitated constantly. The rattle in the young man's hand did precisely what Stephan's did. The two men looked into each other's eyes with intensity, as though this bound their movements together and unified them. When Stephan twisted to the left, the other houngan twisted to the right. Every contortion of the young man was an exact replica of Stephan's movements. The two assons rattled out the same rhythms and the same signals; so did the bells. The backdrop for this "test" was provided by the drummers. The faces of the two men broke into a sweat from the intense nervous effort. At last it came to an end. A woman came forward and wiped their faces with a colored kerchief. The "testing" ceremony was over. The visiting houngan had been proved.

Stephan then made a ritual vèvè, or maize-flour ritual drawing on the ground. Afterward there was more singing and dancing by the hounsi. They sang several songs for Erilie Fréda, the "pure" loa. And Alexis Stephan went into a trance. It was unexpected. The servitors had not prepared for it. In this emergency the visiting houngan took over. He seemed a little anxious. He was *unfamiliar* with the particular psychological factors at play in this particular hounfor. He was not certain of the character of Stephan's possession. But he took over grimly. The houngénicon, an older woman, stepped forward to help. While the young houngan wielded the asson and bell, the woman issued instructions. Stephan, his head hanging back, his eyes closed, was supported by two of the hounsi. Other servitors hurriedly brought out a white sheet and spread it on the ground. A chair and a table were set upon the sheet, and Stephan was placed in the chair, where he now sat with his head hanging limply on his chest.

2: Continuer 8-5 (1937-1964) 1960 8V3 Hakt 8V3

sometimes they are the words of the deity, sometimes words addressed to the deity. The name of the loa may appear anywhere in the song, as both an invocational word and a rhythmic device, with the result that unless one is aware of the song structure he may lose the sense and interest of the words. In these two lines, for example:

Master Agwé comes from the sea,
My cannon is loaded.

The first line describes what happens, from the standpoint of a third person; the second line is a statement by the loa Agwé. Or, take this single line:

Marie Louise oh, we are mixed up!

Here Marie Louise seems to be the person addressed, but in fact it is Marie Louise who is talking. Again:

I don't see my blood, Master Ogoun!

It is not Ogoun who is addressed; the words are his own.

As in nonreligious songs, there is a pattern stanza which is repeated over and over again. As the song goes on, there may be variations for interest and certain embellishments, but by and large the form remains constant. In religious singing there are relatively few examples of songs which progress from one idea to another. When the theme has been stated, that is the song.

One of the preliminary songs in many ritual services is a greeting to the men and women of the société who are present. It is an ochan, or salute of welcome, and comes before the loa themselves are addressed:

Messieurs-dames bonsoir!	Gentlemen and ladies, good evening!
M'apé mandé nous!	I ask you!
Messieurs-dames bonsoir!	Gentlemen and ladies, good evening!
M'apé mandé nous	I ask you
Qui gens nous yé! [Ex. 42]	What people are we?

The answer to the question is implicit, for they are the people of the société, members of the Arada "nation" or Anago "nation," as the case may be.

In almost any service of the Dahomey "nation" the first supplicatory song is addressed to Legba, the keeper of the gate, the guardian of the crossroads, and the "go-between" who intercedes with other loa in the affairs of men. The first appeal to Legba is to open the gate, over which he is master, so that the voices of supplication may be heard and understood. The open gate also provides access for other loa to the service.

A protest theme that runs through many a song stems from the feeling of having been slighted or improperly received in the house of another person. The following song airs the complaint of a person who feels he has been treated shabbily. Metaphorically, he says he is used to eating from an earthern bowl but has been served food in a gourd dish, from which only the poorest of people eat.

Mo 'kúnú mangí nan bulle,
M'pap mangí nan cosin ciyé! [Ex. 57]

I'm accustomed to eating from a bowl;
I'm not going to eat from a cut gourd!

Or again, there is the story of the unwelcome voyager, a person who travels all the way from Jérémie, far out on the southern peninsula, to the distant town of Arcahaye, only to find that he is not wanted there:

Moin sort' Jérémie!	I come from Jérémie!
Moin passé Aux Cayes!	I pass through Aux Cayes!
M'rivé L'Arcahaye, oues amie!	I arrive in Arcahaye, my friends!
C'est moin même yo pas vlé wè yà,	It is me they don't wish to see here,
Moin yo wè!	It is me they see!
C'est moin même yo pas vlé wè yà,	It is me they don't wish to see here,
Moin yo wè oh!	It is me they see, oh!
C'est moin même yo pas vlé wè yà,	It is me they don't wish to see here,
Moin yo wè oh!	It is me they see, oh!

A man complains sometimes of the work that has been foisted upon him by an employer, or by a neighbor with whom he exchanges labor:

M'pas moderne oh moin pas moderne oh!
Habitant passé moin pa'lé café!

I'm not a mule, oh, I'm not a mule, oh!
The farmer takes me to carry coffee!

Even the officials of the houmfor may be publicly reproached in song for acts of injustice. In the following example the houngénicon, the Vodoun priest's assistant, is taken to task. The song probably was first heard in the course of a ceremony at which the houngénicon was present:

Dahomey y wa, houngénicon oh!
Dahomey y wa, 'génicon é!
Dahomey y wa, yo fai mangé caisson moins!
Lè moin vlé pa'lé yo pas vlé moin pa'lé!
Lè moin vlé chanté yo pas vlé moin chanté lò!
Dahomey y wa, yo fai mangé caisson moins! [Ex. 58]

Dahomey y wa,* houngénicon, oh!
Dahomey y wa, houngénicon, é!
Dahomey y wa, they do me wrong!

* The word Dahomey is frequently used as an exclamation.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

I

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR COUNTRY

IN the ten thousand square miles of Haiti's mountains and valleys more than two and a half million people—some say more than three million—are crowded together. Some are black, some light-skinned, but less than five thousand are white, and these are almost all recent immigrants to the country. Modern Haiti has its racial roots primarily in Africa, but its social roots lie as much in Europe as in Africa; if it is "American" at all, geography and a few fairly superficial characteristics are the only American qualities it displays.

Carrying our own cultural interpretations with us when we visit our Caribbean neighbor, we are likely to misunderstand what we see in Haiti, for it is very easy to think of all colored people in terms of our own. To do so is to remain completely ignorant of Haiti. Whereas in the United States we use "Negro" and "colored" indiscriminately as synonyms, making a real distinction only between "black" and "mulatto," all four terms are taboo in polite society in Haiti. A new descriptive vocabulary, an entirely new frame of reference, must be acquired by the friendly foreign visitor to this West Indian republic.[1]

Probably the most striking phenomenon in the country is its division into two social groups. So rigidly are the class lines set that

1. No greater error of tact can be made by visitors to Haiti than to use such commonly accepted American terms as Negro, colored, mulatto, blacks, Africans. Whereas in the United States such words are employed to describe people with a greater or less degree of Negro blood, in Haiti they are generally regarded as opprobrious epithets, emphasizing the color of the epidermis as all important, while ignoring the essential matters of culture, standard of living, and social background. Not many Haitians would have the grace to reply, as President Pétion suggested to a subaltern who was incensed at a white man for calling him "un nègre," "Why, then, did you not call him 'un blanc'?" Probably the most offensive of all the terms is *nègre*, for it calls attention to miscegenation in the family. The educated people in general regard themselves as *docteur Français*, not as transplanted Africans. Books about Haiti which refer to the "black republic" seem to them to ignore the important fact that the blacks, though numerically preponderant, do not rule. The visitor must accordingly acquire a new vocabulary of color. It is safer not to make any allusion at all to the matter; but if occasion demands, one speaks of "jaune" and "brun," not white and black.

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

mind dust, ruts, and a steady succession of bumps. To travel in the average hired car, driven by a Haitian, is one of the grim experiences of life. The driver speeds as if pursued by a demon, while the peasant pedestrians leap for safety into the ditches; the unfortunate passenger is moved to close his eyes to avoid seeing the inevitable crash which does not come. The most comfortable means of travel if one is going only to towns is by ship, for practically all of Haiti's towns are seaports.

To know the towns is still not to know Haiti, however, for two million or more Haitians live in the rural regions. These are the people. And if they are ignorant and not too clean, they are nevertheless models of kindly generosity. It is the proud boast even of the élite that one may travel the length and breadth of the land in perfect safety, in no danger of life or of personal property.

Many homely sights linger in the mind: women washing the family clothes in the stream, laughing and gossiping with their neighbors; men and women talking in animated fashion to themselves, arguing, cajoling, explaining as they walk along; individuals carrying a single flower, simply because it is beautiful; barefoot women, gnarled of hand and lined of face, kneeling in the Catholic church at prayer; taxi drivers who cruise by, hissing in order to attract the attention of a visitor who obviously can afford to ride instead of walk; an apparently ceaseless procession of patient donkeys, always laden, sometimes ridden by women, sometimes urged along from behind; the so-called buses each with its witty or its florid name (Plaisance, Éclair, Grâce-à-Dieu, Polichinelle, Sauve-qui-peut, Montparnasse), which like glorified buckboards jostle woodenly from the town to country hamlets; the winsome, open smile and gay laughter of a peasant boy; the ingratiating charm of a sleeping baby in the noise of the market place. To know the average Haitian is to feel a warm affection for him. His life is never easy, yet he bears it all with true beauty of spirit. If *le bon Dieu* sends distress, he will also make it possible for distress to be borne.

The people are polite, whether to each other or to strangers. A younger person greets an older one as *compère* or *commère*—literally, godfather or godmother; to his equal he says "*frère*" or "*m'sieu*." Sometimes one sees a local patriarch instructing little children in "deportment." This courtesy extends to hospitality: a stranger is almost sure to be offered shelter and food wherever he stops.